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ABSTRACT

Addressed to both social scientists and to nonacademic readers, this book provides an overview of the United States child care market, analyzes the main aspects of child care and child care policy, and proposes a new child care policy. The main thesis of the book is that the child care market functions much better than is commonly believed. Shortages are uncommon, wages are low because caregivers are willing to work for low wages, and quality is low because the average consumer is unwilling to pay enough for high-quality care. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the child care problem in the United States and describe the main features of that market. Chapter 3 presents basic economic models of the child care market. Chapter 4 analyzes jointly the demand for child care and the supply of labor by mothers. Chapter 5 analyzes the supply of child care, finding that both quality and quantity of care are quite responsive to increases in the price of care. Chapter 6 analyzes the relationship between price and quality, using data from samples of day care centers and regulated family day care homes. Chapter 7 studies the determinants and consequences of child care quality on child development. Chapter 8 analyzes child care subsidy policy in the United States. Chapter 9 examines child care regulation policy. Chapter 10 proposes a new policy involving a child allowance to defray expenses of families with children, a child care voucher that is worth more if used for higher-quality child care, systematic efforts to inform consumers of the benefits of higher-quality care and assistance for providers in efforts to improve quality. (Contains 211 references.) (KB)

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